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Report of the Executive Director on UNFPA publications

Summary

This report is being submitted to the Governing Council in response to decision 89/49, paragraph 8, which requested the Executive Director to present to the Council at its thirty-eighth session a detailed report on UNFPA publications so as to enable the Council to consider further the question of funding United Nations Population Fund publications from the administrative and programme support services (APSS) budget. The report is presented in four sections. The first section reviews the policy development of UNFPA's publications programme, highlighting the legislative authority for the Fund's public information and awareness creation activities. The second section presents the findings of an independent analysis of UNFPA regular and specialized publications. The third section examines recent developments in the Fund's distribution system. The report concludes with a brief discussion of the rationale for determining whether a particular publication should be included in the APSS budget or funded by programme resources. This report should be read in conjunction with the Fund's biennial budget estimates for administrative and programme support services for the 1992-1993 biennium (document DP/1991/36).

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INTRODUCTION

1. The UNDP Governing Council, at its thirty-sixth session in June 1989, approved the recommendations of the Executive Director concerning the funding of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) publications as set out in document DP/1989/40, and requested the Executive Director to prepare a detailed report for the thirty-eighth session of the Governing Council "to enable the Council to consider further the question of funding of the United Nations Population Fund publications from the administrative and programme support services (APSS) budget" (decision 89/49, para. 8).

2. This report, prepared in accordance with the Governing Council's request, provides further information on the range of UNFPA publications, including their effectiveness and impact, gives details of developments since the last report and makes recommendations for funding UNFPA publications.

I. POLICY DEVELOPMENT OF UNFPA'S PUBLICATIONS PROGRAMME

3. Public information and awareness creation have been recognized from the outset as a central part of UNFPA's mandate: the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in resolution 1763 (LIV) of 18 May 1973, stated that one of the aims and purposes of UNFPA was "to promote awareness, both in developed and developing countries, of the social, economic and environmental implications of national and international population problems, of the human rights aspects of family planning, and of possible strategies to deal with them in accordance with the plans and priorities of each country". ECOSOC resolution 1986/7 of 21 May 1986 reaffirmed the aims and purposes set out in resolution 1763 (LIV).

4. The Governing Council, at its thirty-seventh session, welcomed "the important contribution of UNFPA publications and other public information efforts in promoting awareness, both in developed and developing countries, of population issues and their social, economic and environmental implications" (decision 90/35 A, para. 17). Subsequently, the General Assembly, in resolution 45/216 of 21 December 1990, urged the Fund "to continue to undertake activities aimed at building up better awareness of population issues" (para. 13).

5. The International Forum on Population in the Twenty-first Century, held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in November 1989, adopted the Amsterdam Declaration, which urged the United Nations Population Fund and its governing bodies "to strengthen further the capacity of UNFPA to foster international awareness creation". The Declaration noted as a priority "the value of information, education and communication activities in development work in general and in population programmes in particular; and the need to direct information activities to both women and men" (para. 1.15).

6. In October 1990, the Executive Director reported to the General Assembly, through the Governing Council and ECOSOC, on the "implications for population programmes of the Amsterdam Declaration and on efforts to develop further the analysis of resource requirements for international population assistance" (document DP/1990/44). Her report stressed that an indispensable component in efforts to increase and sustain the political support required to mobilize sufficient financial, human and institutional resources was a strong programme of information, education and communication aimed at political leaders, planners, parliamentarians, community and religious leaders and other policy makers.

7. To carry out the mandates assigned to UNFPA in the area of awareness creation and public information, the Information and External Relations Division (IERD) of UNFPA, through its Editorial, Publications and Media Services Branch, produces, inter alia, the following publications: (a) the UNFPA Annual Report; (b) Population, a monthly newsletter; (c) Populi, a quarterly journal; (d) UNFPA Publications and Audio-Visual Guide, updated yearly; (e) the State of World Population report; (f) the Inventory of Population Projects in Developing Countries Around the World, published annually; (g) the triennial Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance; and (h) various special publications including, among others, Population Issues: A Briefing Kit, the Fund's Guide to Information Activities for UNFPA Field Offices and a basic brochure on the Fund and its work. The history, evolution and impact of these publications were described in detail in document DP/1989/40, the "Report of the Executive Director on UNFPA publications and audio-visual productions", which was presented to the thirty-sixth session of the Governing Council.

8. The Fund also produces special publications as necessary, including, for example, Safeguarding the Future (based on the Fund's 1988 State of World Population report), Investing in Women (based on the 1989 State of World Population report), Meeting the Population Challenge (publication prepared for the Amsterdam Forum) and Family Planning: Saving Children, Improving Lives (booklet prepared for the World Summit for Children in September 1990).

II. ANALYSIS OF UNFPA PUBLICATIONS

9. In preparing this report, UNFPA commissioned an independent review of its publications from the point of view of their suitability for the intended audiences, their content, and readers' reactions. In the first stage of the analysis, a consultant examined the population information needs of Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UNFPA field offices, and interviewed key media figures as well as public affairs/public relations specialists. The second stage of the analysis involved a series of interviews with Government delegations; various divisions of information within the United Nations system; NGOs specializing in population and related activities; print and electronic communications media; UNFPA staff at headquarters; and UNFPA Country Directors.

10. Readership surveys for Populi and Population in 1989 were also examined. The response to these surveys was very positive and represented a broad array of readers in both the developed and developing countries.

11. Those interviewed for this report generally agreed that UNFPA's public information policy had been effective in raising awareness among different audiences on basic policy issues and that it had appropriately stressed substantive issues over institutional promotion. They cited the State of World Population report and the Inventory of Population Projects in Developing Countries Around the World as the Fund's most prestigious publications. Each is described in some detail below.

12. UNFPA publications can be divided into two broad categories: regular publications and specialized publications. While it could be argued that all the Fund's regular publications serve the programmatic role of awareness creation, the Annual Report and periodical publications such as Populi and Population serve the additional purpose of drawing public attention to UNFPA as an institution and to programmes funded by UNFPA. They may be regarded as among the "programme support" elements of UNFPA activities, for which APSS budget funding is appropriate. The specialized publications on the other hand -- the State of

World Population report, the Inventory, and the Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance -- do not concentrate on UNFPA or UNFPA-funded activities, per se, but cover the spectrum of population issues, policies and programmes. They are thus an integral part of the Fund's programme and of its mandate to create awareness about population issues and their implications for development.

A. Regular publications

Annual Report

13. The Annual Report by the Executive Director, published in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, is the basic information document on UNFPA's activities throughout the year. The report, financed under the APSS budget, has been produced yearly since 1973. The 1989 Annual Report essentially reproduced the text of the equivalent document prepared for the Governing Council, plus a summary of financial and programme information, and a compendium of legislation concerning UNFPA. The Annual Report is distributed free of charge to all interested officials in both developed and developing countries, and to population experts and academics. Recipients include UNFPA Country Directors, United Nations Information Centres, United Nations missions, NGOs, libraries and institutes teaching demography.

14. Distribution of the 1989 report was 1,500 copies in Arabic; 6,565 copies in English; 1,553 in French; 1,500 in Russian and 1,510 in Spanish.

Populi

15. Populi, the official quarterly journal of UNFPA, first published in 1974, is designed to appeal not only to those in the population field but also to those interested in the wider field of economic and social development. Since 1989, it has been published under the APSS budget. Published exclusively in English, Populi contains articles, interviews, essays and book reviews covering all aspects of population and the development process.

16. Populi is distributed free of charge in developing countries to population-related government and non-governmental institutions, as well as to universities that teach demography. In developed countries, the magazine is sold to individual and institutional subscribers at a rate of $14 per year.

17. In readership surveys in 1985 and 1989, Populi achieved high marks from its readers. Some 236 readers of Populi responded to a survey sent out in mid-1989 to a mailing list of 2,234. That represented a 9.5 per cent response, a significant number of replies. It should be noted that 74 per cent of replies to this survey came from developing countries. The survey indicated the following:

(a) Readership loyalty: 73 per cent of the readers have been receiving Populi for several years and want to continue receiving it;

(b) Multiple readership: 36 per cent reported that their issue of Populi was read by up to 10 persons. The biggest single group of readers of Populi belonged to educational institutions whose functions were to convince others of the importance of population issues;

(c) Major groupings of readers: 25 per cent belonged to educational institutions; 15 per cent belonged to the media; 12 per cent belonged to NGOs; and 10 per cent belonged to Government;

(d) Subject preference: The subjects of most concern to readers were: population and development (80 per cent); population and environment (57 per cent); and population programme activities (55 per cent).

Population

18. Population, the monthly UNFPA newsletter, first issued in 1975, covers the Fund's ongoing programme and activities, as well as latest developments in the population field. It is published in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. Since 1989, it has been published under the APSS budget. Each month, about 10,500 copies of Population are distributed free to United Nations missions, UNDP Resident Representatives, UNFPA Country Directors, and United Nations Information Centres, as well as to libraries, institutions and individuals interested in the field of population.

19. Population, like Populi, was also enthusiastically commented on by its readers in surveys in 1985 and 1989. Some 645 readers of Population responded to a readership survey sent to about 5,000 single readers of the newsletter. That represents an 8.7 per cent reply, a very positive response. As in the case of Populi, a large majority of those who responded to the readership survey -- about 70 per cent -- were from developing countries. The survey indicated the following:

(a) Readership loyalty: 45 per cent of respondents have been reading Population from one to five years; 96 per cent wanted to remain on the mailing list;

(b) Multiple readership: 63 per cent replied that their copy was read by up to 10 persons;

(c) Uses of publication: 58 per cent used Population to inform or educate others; 55 per cent read it because of professional interest;

(d) Subject preference: The replies to this section of the questionnaire were extremely diverse. The only topic receiving more than 20 per cent of the responses as being "first preference topic" was family planning and maternal and child health care;

(e) Major groupings of readers: The composition of major groups of the readership was similar to Populi: 22 per cent belonged to libraries and institutions; 19 per cent to NGOs; 10.5 per cent to the media; and 9 per cent to government agencies.

UNFPA Publications and Audio-Visual Guide

20. The UNFPA Publications and Audio-Visual Guide, published in English only, is a very useful and comprehensive publication containing information on printed materials and films produced by the Fund. The Guide is specifically designed to provide easy access to the many important publications available from UNFPA. It has been financed since 1989 under the APSS budget.

21. The 1990 Publications and Audio-Visual Guide includes 231 entries covering: periodicals published by the Fund; general information leaflets and reports; reference works; policy development studies; needs

assessment and evaluation reports; conference reports; special reports; and the Population Policy Compendium, a joint publication of the United Nations Population Division and UNFPA. Books by UNFPA staff members published externally are also listed, as are population reports available from the NGO Liaison Office.

22. Twenty films are listed in the guide, including three made for the annual State of World Population exercise: "Choices For a New Century", a 20-minute film accompanying the 1990 report; "Women: Key to the Future", a 19-minute film for the 1989 report; and "Safeguarding the Future", an 11-minute film for the 1988 report.

23. Beginning in 1989, the Publications and Audio-Visual Guide included special distribution codes to facilitate easy identification and quick dispatch of publications and films requested. For 1990, 3,755 copies of the Publications and Audio-Visual Guide were printed for distribution to UNDP Resident Representatives, UNFPA Country Directors, United Nations Information Centres, United Nations missions, United Nations offices and agencies, NGOs and universities, as well as UNFPA staff.

B. Specialized publications

24. UNFPA has responsibility for two specialized population reference books published in response to specific instructions from the Fund's governing bodies. While not intended as public information publications, as such, each nevertheless contributes directly to better public awareness and knowledge of population issues. These are the Inventory of Population Projects in Developing Countries Around the World, published annually, and the Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance, published every three years.

25. UNFPA also publishes an annual review of population issues, the State of World Population report. The report is an original, well-researched commentary on population issues, taking as its starting point a theme of topical interest. As a public information document relating to a substantive aspect of population, the State of World Population report is essentially part of the UNFPA programme mandate to "promote awareness" of population issues and their social, economic and environmental implications.

Inventory of Population Projects in Developing Countries Around the World

26. The purpose of the Inventory, as stated in its introduction, is "to show, at a glance, by country, internationally assisted projects in developing countries funded, inaugurated or being carried out by multilateral, bilateral, and non-governmental and other agencies and organizations during the reporting period". It is published as a project under the interregional portion of the programme budget.

27. The only compendium of its kind, the Inventory has been issued every year since 1975. It was initiated by discussions among donor countries on the need for a listing of population projects planned or in progress, in order to avoid duplication of assistance and to ascertain where, and what type of, assistance would be most useful. The sixteenth edition of the Inventory, published in May 1990, is the first one to be translated into French. A French version will be issued annually in the future. The Inventory has grown from a 395-page mimeographed report into a 940-page volume containing information on programmes and projects funded by some 225 organizations or agencies to benefit 136 developing countries or territories.

28. For every country listed, the Inventory provides a table with 37 basic demographic indicators (including population totals, density and annual change, fertility rates and GNP), and a section on the Government's views regarding population, which summarizes stated policy objectives on matters such as mortality rates, population growth and distribution, fertility/nuptiality/family and migration.

29. The demographic data are taken from World Population Prospects, published and revised periodically by the Population Division, Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA) of the United Nations. Other sources are the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank. Information on population policies is also provided by two other Population Division publications -- World Population Policies, volumes I and II, and Population Studies, nos. 102 and 102/add.1.

30. The sections on demographic data and government perceptions are followed by a listing of all population-related activities that receive external assistance from either multilateral, bilateral or non-governmental sources. Aside from country programmes, the Inventory provides information on regional projects as well as interregional and global population assistance programmes. Finally, the appendix lists other sources of information in the population field, including current newsletters and reports issued by the various organizations and their contact addresses.

31. Copies of the Inventory are provided free of charge to all agencies and organizations contributing information to the publication, as well as to United Nations missions, UNDP Resident Representatives and UNFPA Country Directors; senior officials of the United Nations, UNDP and specialized agencies; certain organizations with which UNFPA maintains relations; libraries, research and training centres; and individuals and organizations in developing countries. A charge of $20 is requested from organizations and individuals in developed countries.

32. For 1990, 3,000 copies of the English version and 500 copies of the French version of the Inventory were produced, of which about 80 per cent have been distributed. The Inventory, like the triennial Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance, has become an invaluable tool of government planners and policy makers, particularly those involved in funding population projects, and as such is an indispensable part of UNFPA's programme.

33. Since initial publication of the Inventory, Governing Council members have regularly expressed support for it. At its thirty-third session in June 1986, the Council requested the UNFPA Executive Director "to monitor the multilateral population programmes and projects it supports and, in this context, to continue producing on a regular basis the annual Inventory of Population Projects Around the World . . . and include in the Inventory an overview of major trends and developments in the population programmes" (decision 86/34 II, para. 4).

Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance

34. The Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance was mandated by the World Population Plan of Action, 1974. Paragraph 105 of the Plan of Action called on UNFPA, "in co-operation with all organizations responsible for international population assistance, to produce a guide for international assistance in population matters which would be made available to recipient countries and institutions and be revised periodically". Issued triennially in English, French, and Spanish as a companion

volume to the Inventory, it is intended to show the types of technical and financial assistance in the population field that are provided by multilateral, bilateral and regional agencies, by non-governmental organizations, and by university centres, research institutes and training organizations. Like the Inventory, it is published under the programme budget.

35. The first edition of the Guide was issued in April 1976 and subsequent editions every three years thereafter. The last edition of the Guide, published in 1988, was the fifth since its inception. Distribution figures for the 1988 edition were 3,000 in English, 900 in French, and 900 in Spanish.

36. To gather information for inclusion in the Guide, a questionnaire is sent to more than 350 multilateral, regional, bilateral and non-governmental organizations, as well as to universities and research centres throughout the world. The questionnaire contains queries about each organization and its activities, including: (a) its geographical focus and budgeted assistance, and (b) its fields of special interest (such as morbidity and mortality; women, population and development; population distribution and migration; population growth and structure; impact of environmental factors on population; promotion of population activities). The Guide also contains information on programme areas in which assistance is provided, such as: (a) basic data collection; (b) research, information and education; (c) population dynamics; (d) formulation and evaluation of population policies and programmes; and (e) implementation of population policies.

37. The next edition of the Guide will be published in 1991. A full analysis of its history was included in document DP/1989/40, the report to the thirty-sixth session of the Governing Council. Like the Inventory, the Guide is widely used by those concerned with the funding and execution of population programmes. As such, it is a substantive contribution to increasing general awareness of population issues and of programmatic implications.

38. The Guide has been well received by Governments and organizations. Delegates have regularly praised the Guide during Governing Council discussions. At its thirty-third session in June 1986, the Governing Council requested the UNFPA Executive Director "to monitor the multilateral population programmes and projects it supports and, in this context, to continue producing on a regular basis . . . the triennial Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance (decision 86/34 II, para. 4).

State of World Population report

39. The Executive Director's State of World Population report is the basis for the Fund's major communications media exercise during the year. It is the centrepiece of a variety of media-related activities at the national, regional and interregional levels. Funded under the interregional portion of the programme budget, it is sui generis among UNFPA publications in its range and approach.

40. The most widely recognized of UNFPA's publications, the State of World Population report is universally well-received by Governments, the media, NGOs and the general public. Appearing first in 1978, it became the prototype for other annual sectoral assessments of United Nations development bodies. The 1991 report is being published in the six official languages of the United Nations, plus 15 others.

41. The packet of feature stories and graphics issued with each report has been widely used in developing countries to disseminate population information. In developed countries, press coverage tends

to focus more on the report itself, as well as on interviews with, or comments from, the Executive Director and UNFPA staff, including participants in the media conference at which the report is released.

42. The audience for the report extends well beyond that reached by the mass media, to include academics, experts and commentators who use it for research and background throughout the year. References to the State of World Population report are regularly made by members of the Governing Council during their consideration of UNFPA-related items. Delegates to the thirty-fifth session of the Governing Council in June 1988 noted with satisfaction the 1988 State of World Population report (decision 88/34 I, para. 18) and in a separate decision, endorsed the "Agenda for Change" and "Conclusion" sections of the report concerning "the requirements to establish a sustainable relationship between human and other resources" (decision 88/35, para. 3). The report has fuelled discussion in national and international bodies on its major themes, for example, on population/environment linkages (1988) and on women, population and development (1989). "Choices for the Next Century", the subject of the 1990 report, was debated in the United Kingdom House of Lords.

43. The Amsterdam Declaration stated that the 1989 report on "Investing in Women" offered "an excellent opportunity to reflect on past activities and to chart an optimal course of action for the 1990s and the beginning of the next century". The Governing Council at its thirty-seventh session noted "with appreciation" the Fund's 1990 State of World Population report; agreed with the report "that population growth and distribution factors play a key role in safeguarding the environment and fostering development; that human resource development should receive a high degree of attention in the Fourth Development Decade and that efforts in family planning, women's advancement, health and education are mutually reinforcing and should be pursued in parallel" (decision 90/35 A, para. 16). Thus, the report has significantly contributed to heightening the awareness of population issues in general and of their socio-economic and environmental implications.

44. Distribution figures for the 1990 State of World Population report media package were: Arabic, 1,200; English, 5,000; French, 700; and Spanish, 700.

III. DISTRIBUTION

45. The key to a successful publications programme is timely, effective and directed distribution. During 1990, UNFPA distributed approximately 250,000 copies of its publications world-wide. To ensure the timely yet cost-effective distribution of such a large volume of material, UNFPA installed a computerized address system in 1989/1990. The new distribution system is based essentially on a commercial mail-order approach, which is designed to distribute the greatest number of pieces to the most people as efficiently and quickly as possible.

46. The computerized address system, using an integrated software programme, enables the Fund to monitor the flow of its publications and to maintain accurate inventory and subscription records. The system's sophisticated cross-referencing mechanism also helps UNFPA to direct information materials to specific target audiences and to keep abreast of the outreach of its various publications. This is done through the continual updating (and automatic cross-referencing) of the Fund's comprehensive mailing list, which is composed of United Nations missions, government agencies, intergovernmental groups, NGOs, selected electronic and print media, United Nations agencies, libraries, and commercial organizations, as well as field offices of the United Nations development system.

47. UNFPA also handles a large volume of special requests for information materials, totalling some 10,000 per year, or about 27 requests of all kinds each day. A 1989 consultant's study noted that such requests significantly increased the workload of the UNFPA distribution system, since the requests, by their very nature, cannot be accommodated within the computerized address system alone and thus require considerable staff time to answer.

IV. CONCLUSION

48. As noted above, the Governing Council approved the recommendations of the Executive Director concerning the funding of UNFPA publications as set out in document DP/1989/41 (decision 89/49, para. 8). These were: (a) that the cost of the Fund's Annual Report, Population monthly newsletter, Populi quarterly journal, UNFPA information pamphlets, UNFPA Publications and Audio-Visual Guide and several other UNFPA publications be integrated into the administrative and programme support services (APSS) budget; and (b) that the State of World Population report, the Inventory of Population Projects in Developing Countries Around the World and the Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance continue to be funded through project budgets.

49. Based on the independent review of UNFPA publications, the main findings of which are presented above, the Executive Director again recommends that the cost of the State of World Population report, the Inventory of Population Projects in Developing Countries Around the World and the Guide to Sources of International Population Assistance should continue to be charged to programme resources and that the Annual Report, Population, Populi, UNFPA information pamphlets and UNFPA Publications and Audio-Visual Guide be retained in the APSS budget.

50. The main factor determining whether a publication should be included in the APSS budget or funded under programme resources, in the view of the Executive Director, is whether the publication is in essence designed either (a) to promote greater awareness and understanding of the activities of UNFPA, per se, or (b) to promote dialogue and the exchange of information on the wider issues of population and development themselves. The Executive Director suggests that those publications in the first category are essentially intended to support the UNFPA programme and thus should continue to be charged to the APSS budget. Those publications in the second category, however, are in essence designed to fulfill the mandate of UNFPA to increase awareness of population issues both in developed and developing countries and thus are an integral part of the programme itself and should be financed by the programme budget.

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